

From language to violence: no metaphor is innocent?

It has long been attested that metaphor is an essential part of our daily speech and thought. Due to its cognitive role, metaphor is a rich resource of investigating people's conceptualisation of the world. Metaphor may have numerous functions from generating new meanings of words to facilitating our understanding of abstract and/or complex phenomena. But can metaphor also shape the way we see the world and can its use have more dangerous consequences? Can metaphor play a role in spreading hate speech, for instance?

Drawing on contemporary linguistic research, I am going to discuss how language and metaphor may shape our thought, how systematic use of metaphor can become part of the expression and construction of ideological views and how metaphor may contribute to fostering negative attitudes towards certain groups of people. Alongside theoretical material, we will look into some examples of the use of metaphors and discuss their wider social implications. Finally, I will address the question of what we can do about the "violent" metaphors in discourse.